

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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March 1, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: NSCIC

I do not consider the net efforts of the NSCIC's Working Group to be entirely satisfactory. After more than a year in existence only three studies have been completed, one more is nearing completion, one has been cancelled, and one has gone virtually nowhere despite four months of work. None of the studies have been discussed by the Principals, and the Working Group itself has scrupulously avoided discussing the issue of guidance that could be given to the DCI on intelligence support to policymakers. The quality of work in the studies has been mixed. Those with aggressive team heads have presented perceptive analyses of how the community functions. Others have suffered from lack of analysis, team members unwilling (or unable) to take time to do the work, and heavy reliance on my staff for asking the critical questions. Also, the general thrust of the studies' conclusions have been on local management and analytical problems in intelligence which do not require the attention of NSCIC Principals. Larger issues have surfaced infrequently, mostly at my initiative.

These problems are attributable to a number of factors.

-- Producers dominate the Working Group and the study teams, but seem generally unable to criticize themselves. In some cases this results from too many years within intelligence; in others it comes from an apprehension about criticizing one's organization, an inability to conduct real in-depth evaluations, or too many other demands on team member's time.

-- Members of the Working Group, in the absence of strong interest from the Principals, have not aggressively pursued their tasks. With the exception of some ASDI and PRG work reviews have been assigned to intelligence teams and placed under my

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guidance. Having done this, support for the effort by Working Group members has languished. My criticism of this lack of support to various members has resulted in much jawboning but little action.

-- The review effort -- and the basic tasks of the NSCIC -- may be too demanding in some cases to be handled by part-time interagency groups of analysts. Reviewing intelligence functions requires an inquisitiveness, perceptiveness, and willingness to dig that may be beyond some individuals and impossible in the organizational environment of an interagency part-time group. Finding the critical question in which decisionmakers are really interested may also be too abstract for analysts who have years of experience in dealing with more concrete issues.

-- The Principals have not supported the effort. While I think it is unrealistic to expect great involvement by the Principals, the unavailability of Kissinger and the absence of NSCIC meetings (only one to date) have definitely influenced the vigor of the Working Group. Also, the DCI has not availed himself of the opportunity as a Principal to informally encourage the Working Group.

-- The Working Group has been dominated by CIA. Much to my concern, studies have been informally staffed through CIA -- either by teams or by the DCI staff -- before being released to me or to other Working Group members. CIA personnel and DCI people with CIA backgrounds have nearly outnumbered other participants at meetings. Their combined experience and resistance have made constructive discussion difficult without detracting from the collegial atmosphere of the meetings, which few people have been willing to risk.

The Job of the Working Group

The Working Group, in my opinion, is virtually the NSCIC. The Principals have only met once and in reality are too busy with other tasks within their respective organizations to do more than hold symbolic meetings and pass on recommendations made by the Working

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Group. Perhaps a change in activity by the Principals will occur in the future - certainly I hope to increase Kissinger's role in the coming months - but for the present, the Working Group needs to see its role as far greater than it has been willing to accept so far. Giving guidance, for example, has been avoided as being a task unique to the Principals; the Working Group should be recommending the guidance for the Principals to discuss and to pass to the DCI.

The Working Group has two basic functions:

- To provide the Principals with recommendations that enable them to give the DCI guidance as to the substantive intelligence needs of top-level policymakers.

- To carry out, or to cause to be carried out, a continuing review of the substantive intelligence products and intelligence support provided to top-level consumers.

In carrying out these tasks, the Working Group naturally surfaces other issues which can be communicated informally directly to the DCI or more formally through the Principals.

Considering past problems and the tasks being faced, changes could be instituted in three aspects of the Working Group's operation:

- Personnel

- Work Procedures

- Work Focus

Changes in Personnel

Antidotes are needed for the roles of CIA and other producers and for the lack of active participation by consumers such as the JCS and Department of Justice. Some changes are being instituted simply by the change in personnel and direction produced by Schlesinger's taking over. Others include:

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-- Membership in meetings could be restricted to decrease the number of CIA personnel attending.

-- Separate sub-groups of producers and consumers could be formed to discuss problems free from the influence of each other.

-- JCS and Justice could be encouraged to participate more actively or withdraw from sessions. In particular, the JCS should take a more active role.

-- Other organizations should be invited to participate in relevant discussions -- i.e., NSC staff members, Treasury and Commerce participants.

-- Consultants may be employed to conduct evaluations and to assist in recommending changes.

-- Lower-level working groups could be formed for some problems. For example, branch or area heads and analysts from different agencies could hold conferences to discuss problems and make recommendations.

The preeminent role of the intelligence producer may really be unavoidable. Non-intelligence personnel and organizations are unwilling to participate fully because of indifference, lack of expertise and willingness to defer to intelligence. The agencies, on the other hand, do have the monopoly on knowledge and a vested interest to commit personnel.

Changes in Work Procedures

The Working Group has met less than half a dozen times since its inception. Its approach has been to develop some ideas for study efforts in order to examine certain types of intelligence support. For example, to review intelligence support to policymakers during crises, studies have been conducted of the Indo-Pak War, Arab-Israeli Ceasefire and Jordanian Crisis. Each study is then assigned to a team of interagency participants, usually people involved in the issue at the

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time, who prepare the report under the supervision of the Net Assessment Group. Conducting the study requires extensive interviewing, reading past intelligence products and drafting several detailed papers. The project competes for team member's time with his other daily departmental work. The final paper is forwarded by the NAG to the DCI/PRG (General Thomas) who distributes it to the members of the Working Group.

Disadvantages to this approach have already been pointed out. Some can be dealt with:

-- Meetings of the Working Group should be held at scheduled intervals, preferably at least monthly. Having scheduled meetings will increase the pace of the action and will provide more impetus to become involved. Meetings of the sub-groups should also be held frequently, but as necessary.

-- The membership and work procedure of study teams should be altered. Several alternatives can be discussed or tested.

1. The DCI staff should have a full-time section to study some intelligence issues, either independently or as team leaders of interagency groups.
2. Agencies who chair studies should be held responsible to the Working Group for the work.
3. The Working Group should exert more control over selecting personnel for study teams. Study members should have sufficient time to work on them, and those members "close to" the topic should be balanced by more "neutral" participants.

-- Depending upon the topic, the Working Group should exert more day-to-day control over the effort. For example, rather than accepting a finished document, the Working

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Group may require review of the TOR, background data, initial conclusions and final recommendations of some studies.

-- Consultants should be used more frequently to tap outside expertise vis-a-vis certain geographic areas or management problems.

-- Instead of study teams, the Working Group may want to bring together different analysts and managers to discuss known problems and possible solutions.

Changing the Focus

The Working Group has devoted its effort to date to three studies evaluating the intelligence support during a crisis, one of support to a NSSM and one of intelligence production on Yugoslavia. The viewpoint of these works has been the evaluation of support and the identification of problems in internal intelligence management. Little attention has been given to the important task of developing guidance to the community as to the top-level policymakers' intelligence needs.

In the future, both the Working Group and the study teams should devote effort equally between the evaluation and guidance tasks. Perhaps this could be done in stages, as described in a previous paragraph, or the DCI's staff could propose guidance for discussion in Working Group meetings.

The projects which the Working Group takes on in the future should be discussed by the membership at the earliest possible moment. I have several preferences for the near future:

-- Assemble the three studies of crisis support and recommendations for guidance for transmittal to the Principals. Guidance in this case will largely be focused on solutions to structural and communication problems.

-- Initiate a recurring effort (perhaps a standing subcommittee) to identify the three to five major topics of probable interest to policymakers over the next six months.

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-- Detailed specification of terms of reference for NIE's or other special DCI national intelligence products should be formulated. Possibly the NSCIC should review and issue these.

-- Begin a long-term effort based upon Helms' Planning Guidance to identify policymakers' needs in outyears.

With the completion of the crisis studies, the Working Group could turn its attention to any one of a variety of topics.

-- A review of products such as NIE's, NSSM support, economic intelligence reports, or current daily intelligence production.

-- A review of intelligence support with respect to a given nation or group of nations.

-- Studies of special problems highlighted by the crisis and other studies (e.g., logistics methodology, PRC missile estimates, use of unclassified material). Of special importance may be studies of communications problems, the details of which cannot be effectively understood by the sorts of retrospective studies undertaken thus far.

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